

FACTORS AFFECTING WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN TAMIL NADU WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SALEM DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Education is considered as a very fundamental and important tool for social and economic improvement. Education of girls is seen as a basic human right and crucial input for national development. It is one of the best investments a society can make. The education of girls is taken as a serious issue in Tamil Nadu. Low literacy level and educational achievement, larger than the gender disparity in enrolment and completed education are important features affecting the Tamil Nadu's economy. The Tamil Nadu government pays more attention to primary and middle schools, private school pays more attention to higher secondary schools. It was found that the main reasons and causes that are affecting women's education are poverty, lack of interest, lack of access to school and having to do the household chores, migration and being a girl child. The current study shall analyses the status of education of girls in Salem District. The dropout rate and the factors related to it will be examined and the study shall suggest intervention strategies for the improvement of girls' education in Salem District. The study offers perspicacity into education of women and offers for deciphering the challenges. It also generates new ideas for developing interventions to link education.

KEYWORDS: Women's Education, Development, Challenges, Causes, Salem District & Tamil Nadu

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INTRODUCTION

Education is generally considered as a tool for development of a women's status. It is regarded as a ladder for occupation as well as social mobility. The post-independence era has seen a significant progression in women's education. The southern province had a comparatively promising record in the zone of women's education, yet there is an education gap between boys and girls still continues. Overall education is very essential not just for men, but for women too, since it is the education that helps men and women live, keep them intelligent. It moreover makes an individual a good citizen of the nation. (Anita, 2000)

Education of girls is seen as a basic human right and crucial input for national development. It is considered to be a great aspect for the growth of the people as well as the society. An educated woman has abilities as well as self-confidence. But there is a big gender gap which forbids girls from getting a good education. The gender bias is reflected in the family, educational process, attitude of teachers, curriculum, and parental value of education of the girl child. Gender discrimination in education is also influenced by factors such as poverty and limited employment opportunities, cultural disparities and traditions. Seth (2001) stated that the prospect of any girl children becomes even more jeopardized if her mother is uneducated, since a literate mother by any means will

teach her children. Thus, it might lead to overall benefits not only to women, but also to the whole society. The educational requests of the girls have got the distinctive consideration in the wake of international and national efforts to empower women. The nation does not have ample sufficient educational facilities available to a greater section of the population. Likewise, the country was unsuccessful in generating and making available adequate alternative facilities in all areas where school children are more.

The current educational context of Tamil Nadu offers us a progressive image in enrolment at the primary level yet the retention of the enrolled girl children is always considered as a challenge. Children from deprived and marginalized sections of society tend to drop-out from schools for various reasons. There are various social, economic, cultural and political reasons attributed by researchers for dropping out of children from schools. Education cannot be misconstrued for more literacy. Understanding education as a tool for social change where educated individual understands his/her identifies and develops the skills, enjoys rights and equality in society and is empowered to take decisions becomes the core value in universalizing education.

While female education is of paramount importance, clearly not enough has been done on this front. The provision of midday meals, preference for female teachers, universalization of Anganwadis (which free older girls of sibling responsibility); construction of separate toilets, residential schools in educationally backward areas and other gender sensitive initiatives have gone a long way in keeping girls in school. However, these efforts remain grossly inadequate as millions of girls remain out of school, leaving at the upper primary and secondary levels. Poor support structures and inadequate educational facilities exacerbate their educational deprivation. Despite education in government schools being officially free, there is a marked gender disparity and the education of girls remains a concern especially in rural India.

OBJECTIVES

- To profile the status of education among girls in Salem district
- To find the constraints in the education of girls at the primary, middle, high school and higher secondary level.
- To record the various schemes of the government to improve education among girls
- To suggest policy and programmes to ensure the education of girls in the Salem district.

LITERACY IN TAMIL NADU

Literacy is the crucial for socioeconomic improvement of any country besides it is a central human development indicator. As per Education Status Report (ESR), Tamil Nadu, 2011 articulates that India at present has the major illiterate population in the world. The census of 2011 reveals that 2001–2011 literacy growth of a decade is around 9.2% that is much less than the preceding decade. Tamil Nadu is one of the states with high literacy level. The state performed soundly in terms of literacy growth during the decade 2001 –2011. According to the 2011 Census, the Tamil Nadu literacy rate is a rising trend and is currently around 80.03%. Of that, male and female literacy rate is around 86.77% and 73.09 % respectively. Some districts in Tamil Nadu that has a greater literacy rate are

- Kanyakumari (91.75%),
- Chennai (90.18 %),

- Tuticorin (86.16 %),
- The Nilgiris (85.20 %) and
- Kancheepuram (84.49%).

Dharmapuri is the District, which has the literacy rate of 64.71% and stands first from the bottom. The male and female literacy rate in Dharmapuri is 69.91% and 60.03 % respectively. There are 13 Districts that are assumed to focus less on women's education, since all those districts have an overall literacy rate of 70 %. The districts are

- Dharmapuri,
- Ariyallur,
- Villupuram,
- Krishnagiri,
- Erode,
- Salem,
- Thiruvannamalai,
- Perambalur,
- Namakkal,
- Karur,
- Dindigul,
- Pudukkottai and
- Theni.

In 12 Districts, the gender gap is above 20 %. This census shows that Salem is one among the states with low female literacy rate. The overall educational profile of Salem district is provided and analyzing the growth, causes and reasons that resulted in the reduced female literacy rate.

EDUCATIONAL PROFILE OF SALEM DISTRICT

Under this heading the educational developments in school and college level, particularly Salem's educational system has been dealt. Firstly an overview has been given and subsequently a detailed analysis has been carried out

The arrangement of school education in Tamil Nadu has 4 levels. The first level is the Primary level, second the middle school level, third, the high school level and fourth the Higher Secondary level.

- The Primary school - I to V classes,
- The middle school - VI to VIII classes,
- The high school- IX and X classes and

- The Higher Secondary level - XI and XII standards.

The schools are classified into

- Government,
- Private aided and
- Unaided.

There are recognized and renowned schools that proved its capability by outdoing many public examinations, directed by corresponding educational boards.

Table 1: Schools by Category in Tamil Nadu and in Salem district (2017-2018)

S. No	Management	School Category				
		Primary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	Higher Secondary Schools	Grand Total
1.	Total number of schools in Tamil Nadu	35605	9556	5814	7499	58474
2.	Total number of schools in Salem district	1428	417	249	335	2429

Source: Sarva Shiksha Abiyan, Tamil Nadu-General Educational Survey 2017-18

Table 1 shows the total number of schools in Salem district as well as in the Tamil Nadu. The table revealed that universal education in Salem is progressing ever since the last decade. But there are still seen certain hurdles that hinder the growth of girl enrolment in schools especially in the rural area.

Table 2: Enrollment of Girls at Various Levels in Salem District

Category of Schools	Total No. of Students	Girl Students	Percentage of Girls Enrolment
Primary schools	120142	59793	49.76%
Middle schools	67289	33016	49.06%
High schools	79512	36666	46.11%
Higher secondary schools	315533	153291	48.58%

Source: Sarva Shiksha Abiyan, Tamil Nadu -General Educational Survey 2017-18

Table 2 reveals that nearly 50% of the total enrolment in both the primary and middle schools are girls. But there is observed a reduced enrolment of girls in high school as well as higher secondary schools when compared to both the primary and middle school.

14-16 years is usually considered as the age when girls hit puberty. Many girls, particularly in rural Salem are stopped from attending schools, further when they attain puberty. This was found as one of the main reasons for not attending schools mostly in rural areas.

The higher learning institutions (colleges) in Salem district have been classified under Constituent College, Government College, and Private Colleges. Further above table 3 reveals that 77.41% of the colleges are run by the private management; one tenth (10%) is the Government Colleges, aided colleges nearly 7 % and finally Constituent College account for 6.45 %. The private colleges are growing much faster as compared to the government colleges. It is to be remembered that due to personal influence in the university, private managements get approval for courses and teachers

without giving due weightage to the ample availability of infrastructure besides many. Also it is disturbing to note that the state government sanctions courses to the government colleges without looking into the availability of class rooms. On many occasions the teaching posts are not occupied for long time, which hamper the job. It gives a strong suspicion that the policy makers willingly allow the state run colleges to loosen their grip naturally.

Table 3: Higher Educational Institutions in Salem District

Name Of The Institutions	Numbers	Percentage
Constituent colleges	2	6.45
Government colleges	3	9.61
Private colleges	24	77.41
Aided colleges	2	6.41
Total	31	100

Source: Periyar University

Table 4: Institutions for other Professional Education, Students and Teachers

Name of the Institution	No. of Institutions	Total Students	Girl Students	No. of Teachers
Private polytechnic	9	13229	1595	796
Government I.T.I	3	1395	149	132
Private I.T.I	8	430	18	58

Source: Technical Education, 2010-2011

Table 4 explores the institutions for other professional institutions Salem district. At present 9 private polytechnic colleges, eight private industrial training institute and three government institutions has been running in the study area.

Table 5: Distribution of College Students Enrollment in Salem Districts 2017-18

Name of the Institutions	No. of Institution	Total No. of Students	Total No. of Girls	Percentage of Girls
Constituent colleges	2	1853	916	49.43
Government colleges	3	8874	4758	53.61
Private colleges	24	27116	21181	78.11
Aided colleges	2	3263	2470	75.69

Source: Periyar University

The enrolment in various colleges of Salem district has been given in Table 5. It gives an indication that the self-financing colleges do have scope for admitting maximum students. This table showed great progression of the girls' enrolment in colleges. The girls' enrolment in private colleges are nearly 78.11%, while it is 75.69 % in aided colleges.

CAUSES FOR LOW ENROLMENT OF GIRLS IN SALEM

The main reasons for dropping out and never enrolling were analyzed, and it was found that reasons such as family, gender, poverty, lack of interest in studies, low value of girls' education, lack of encouragement, illiteracy of parents and some school factors have pushed the girl children out of the school.

Deficiency of Female Teachers: Girls usually to attend school when they are many woman teachers in the school. Girls seem to be more comfortable and responsive to female teachers and they tend to vigorously focus and participate in the many learning processes and activities. Likewise, parents, particularly in rural zones possess an uncertain feeling in sending their children, especially girl children to schools with a majority of male teachers.

Deficiency of Transport Services: Predominantly in rural areas, transportation is needed for girls to attend middle and secondary schools, which are often far away from their places. Primary education is usually available nearby, however secondary educational schools consider that children might leave the schools when they get older, and so very few schools have been built in the Salem district to teach to older children. Inevitably, such schools are inaccessible to the rural children since many most of the schools are situated in urban areas, thus making it difficult for girl children to get accessibility. This obstinate notion should be thrown out and equal numbers of schools at every level should be established.

Insufficient Hostel Facilities and Services for Women: Many girls wanting to pursue higher education require hostel facilities and service especially for the girls from distances. Girls predominantly those in SC and ST communities might carry on their education to higher levels if they can find free or economical housing facilities and amenities closer the educational organizations and institutions.

Dreading Sexual Harassment: Parents every so often worry about sending their girl children to schools. Occurrences of kidnapping, raping and molestation stifle the eagerness of parents as well as girl students in continuing education after a certain age. Subsequently, they stay bound to their households.

Fixed Schooling Hours: This system might not be suitable for girls from countryside besides, they are required for doing household works and also for farms and fields in these hours. It is one of the sources for lesser involvement rates of girls in education. The admission proportions of girls and their retention could be enhanced if educational services are made accessible to girls in the time appropriate to them. Such adversarial factors becomes a cluster in our state particularly in rural areas that result in unappealing situations in which girls need to overcome the complications to continue schooling. In most of the cases, their education is relentlessly compromised even when they continue to study. A biased approach and outlook accumulate amongst teachers. Considering the organizational, financial, and safety failures behind community education for girls might possibly support us in limiting the enervating impacts of poverty.

A majority of the girls have to spend their leisure time in doing household work and firewood collection. Girls however, wanted to continue their studies if they are given better chances. The study reveals that according to parents, they are unable to send their girls to school due to poor economic conditions. The value of girls' education is undermined. School factors like single teacher school, non-attractive curriculum, co-educational schools, and high cost of education are other reasons pointed out by parents for withdrawing the girls from schools. The girls are forced to work to increase the income for the household. The teachers opined the low income of the parents and their illiteracy are the main reasons for the dropping out of girls. They also mentioned that gender constraints in society are another reason for non-enrolment of girls in schools. The low value of education of the girls is another reason. The girls from a nomadic community are engaged in performing the whip dance with their parents. Many girls assist in agriculture and household work. Teachers suggested that creating awareness among parents, of the value of education, provision of scholarships, and establishment of Anganwadis can improve the enrolment of girls in school. The midday meal scheme until the higher secondary school should help in the retention of girls in schools. Parental education is considered as a positive factor in enrolling the girls and their retention in schools.

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES TO ENROLL GIRLS

Teachers should initiate the enrolment campaign by meeting the parents in their households and giving awareness programmes on the necessity of girls' education. Implementing compulsory and free education up to 14 years increasing

the budget allocation for elementary education, improving the basic amenities are the various initiatives to abolish child labor according to the teachers. Social security to parents in the unorganized sector can promote the education of their girl children. Another very important issue is the teacher student ratio. In many village schools there is only a single teacher to handle the primary sections. Deficiency of teachers might be a cause for many drop outs.

There should be flexibility in approach and the classes can be conducted according to the convenience of the girl children taking the habitation as the focus.

It is essential to set up guidance and counselling bureau for students in all habitats to function within the school complex, under the agency of the village education committee with a skilled and trained counsellor. Since one of the main reasons for the dropping out of girls is family circumstances, the counselling centre can promote and counsel the parents on the importance of girls' education. The counselling centre can bring awareness to the parents to plan the future of the girls' education. Various other Issues also shall be addressed in counselling sessions.

The educating girls in SC and ST has been given special emphasis in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Special attention and care should be given to youngsters from these groups. Numerous SSA structures and schemes have a better emphasis on girls from such groups. The involvement of the children of tribal and Dalit groups is encouraged through incentives. SSA provides native units to advance a background specific involvement. Special focus is given in SSA since the SC/ST girls are more vulnerable and habitat based on education intervention is advocated.

CONCLUSIONS

The study ascertained that poor socioeconomic background, early marriage, low societal values for girls, the responsibility for siblings, assistance in household work, attainment of puberty, belonging to low castes were the main reasons for girls being out of school. Access to school, non-availability of transport facilities, school factors such as overcrowded class rooms, poor student teacher ratio, corporal punishment in schools, high cost of education, lack of knowledge of various education schemes, lack of basic amenities are some of the school related factors observed in this study that retain girls from attending schools. Social evils like dowry, earning for marriage, attainment of puberty and early marriage are the societal factors that prevent the girls from attending school. The study shows that universalisation of primary education can be achieved only if we can promote universal access. The enhancement of the quality of education can attract the children and equip them with necessary knowledge and life skills. Programmes for the out of school girls can be designed and implemented more effectively with the support and involvement of the community. Modern technology and computer literacy programme are to be a part of curriculum to attract the out of school girls than the traditional tailoring, embroidery, cooking, etc. The teachers should be motivated, well trained to understand the hardships faced by the girls due to the various constraints in the way of their schooling. The teaching, learning materials and the curriculum should be prepared with a view to the total development of the girls' body, mind and spirit. Fulfillment of the above factors will help building a gender just society where girl children are the focus.

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